Hi. My name is David Kraiker. I am a geographer and a data dissemination specialist at the United States Census Bureau. I've been here for more than 20 years. My background is studying geography, cartography. And I'm actually going to walk you through some of the concepts today. This is actually a larger course called the Ins and Outs and Whereabouts of Census Geography. And today, we are actually going to be looking at the module titled Legal Geography. And within that, we're going to look at consolidated city, county and equivalents, county subdivision, minor civil division, place, and within that incorporated place, state and equivalents, and townships and towns, and urban growth areas. So first let's think about what is a legal geography. And so legal geographies are actually entities that originate from legal actions, treaties, statutes, ordinances, resolutions, and court decisions, etcetera. They also have elected government officials and/or stakeholders, who usually represent legal geographic areas. So a little bit more easily to understand if we look over here on the right at the image. These are the general geographies or entities that we think of on a day-to-day basis. So, for example, the State of Georgia or a county or a city or place within that county. So these are the normal sort of legal geographies that we think about from day to day, but we do have many others. This is a hierarchy that we have at the Census Bureau. And we like to say that certain things nest within other things. So, for example, if you look at the very bottom, the Census Bureau, we do create blocks. And then within the blocks, construct block groups. And then from that, tracts and then counties, states, and nations. So those all nest within each other. But, for example, if you look over here on the left, ZCTA (zip code tabulation area), we say that those actually nest within the whole nation, simply because some zip codes cross state lines, so they don't really nest within the state. So that's the sort of thing that we need to keep in mind when we're looking at hierarchy. These are the things that we're going to look at today. We're going to spotlight these things. So we have the nation, the state, and the county. And then within the county over here, we have county subdivisions, and more specifically, we have minor civil divisions. On the right nesting within the state, we have urban growth areas and then we have places, okay. And typically we have, in this module anyway, we will talk about incorporated places. Let's move forward a little bit and let's look at states or state equivalents. They're actually the primary legal subdivision of the United States. States, unlike US territories, possess a number of powers and rights under the United States Constitution. The District of Columbia, DC, Puerto Rico, and the island areas -- meaning, US Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and Northern Mariana Islands -- are not states. But for Census Bureau purposes and for statistical purposes, they are considered the equivalent of a state. And so when you're looking for data, you would look for them in the area where you would find the states. We are not going through this alphabetically, instead we're going through it geographically, thinking our way down. So we just thought about states. And then nesting within the states, the first legal geography that we have are actually urban growth areas. They're legally defined entities within Oregon and Washington, that are defined around incorporated places, and used to regulate urban growth. There's a reginal boundary set in an attempt to control urban sprawl by mandating that the area inside the boundary be used for urban development and the area outside be preserved in its natural state or used for agriculture. Urban growth area is used by local governments as a guide to zoning and land-use decisions. They are delineated cooperatively by state and local officials and then confirmed by state law. So let's think about place, okay. It's a very generic term.

But place is a concentration of population, which has a name, is locally recognized, and is not part of any other place. It tends to have a residential nucleus. And the Census Bureau uses this term to refer to most cities and some towns and villages and boroughs around the nation. But a place may be an incorporated place, which means it would be self-governing. Or it may be a Census designated place, which we will not talk about in this module. That is in the Statistical Geographies module. But let's delve into that a little bit more, incorporated place. Incorporated place is a type of governmental unit incorporated under the state laws -- a city or a town, a borough or a village -- and having recently legally prescribed limits and powers and functions. Now, the Census Bureau recognizes incorporated places in all the US states except Hawaii. And for Hawaii, by agreement with the office of the governor, the Census Bureau recognizes all places as census designated places (CDPs), rather than incorporated places. The idea of Census designated place is discussed in another module. So incorporated places tend to take their duties quite seriously, and they do have a lot of sway over their local jurisdiction, as we can see on the right here. This place city in Florida even post their city limit signs in the middle of the river because of boating regulations and fishing regulations. So here we are out in the field and today we're going to look at the difference between what's called an incorporated place and areas that are not incorporated places. Meaning, for example, a township or a town or the county. And so we're going to go this way and we're going to look at this incorporated place here in northern New Jersey, which is actually called a village. So here we are. A couple things we should look at when we're trying to think about what an incorporated place could be. Certainly, this isn't like this all around the country. But certainly, in the Northeastern and the middle of the country, we have well-established incorporated places like this village. And as we're coming into the place, you can see that the sidewalk will begin. It's just a little bit beyond this sign. We start to see some amenities and some infrastructure, improvements that exist. So, for example, the sidewalk. And if you were to look a little bit further along this road, past these parked cars, you would see that there's actually a lane on the side of the street for parking, okay. I don't know if you can see that. And then as we get even closer, we're going to see that this place has gas lanterns. It actually also has a crosswalk here for people to get across this street. And the other thing that it has, believe it or not, is a center line in the road to separate traffic. If I were to turn around slowly so as not to make you dizzy, and look at where we just came from, we might see here on the left that there is no sidewalk. There is a sidewalk on the right, but no sidewalk on the left. And the center line sort of peters away. There's nothing down there. The other thing that's kind of interesting as we come into this village, there is a sign. So coming in and leaving, there is a sign. But over here on the right going in to this adjoining township, there is nothing. There's no amenity letting us know where we are or where we're coming in to. So that is kind of a difference between incorporated places and places that are not incorporated. The other little issue here is if you are in other parts of the country, incorporated places like cities are expanding so quickly that sometimes they do not have enough time or capability to put in those amenities. It may take them years to actually do that. All right. And so let's move on to county and county equivalents. So counties are the primary legal subdivision of most of the states. Counties have significant functions in all states except southern New England, where county governments have been abolished or partially abolished. But those entities remain for administrative or statistical purposes. We also need to think about the terminology. They are not called counties everywhere. So, for example, Louisiana, they're known as

parishes. Alaska, they're called boroughs. In Puerto Rico, they're called municipios. We also need to think about the idea of independent cities. And so an independent city that is not in a territory of any county or counties, with certain exceptions. Independent cities are classified by the United States Census Bureau as county equivalents. And most independent cities are located in Virginia, but also in Baltimore, Maryland, St. Louis, Missouri, and Carson City, Nevada are considered independent cities. We also have something called a consolidated city, okay. And this is not even listed in a geo hierarchy, but let's just think about it a little bit. Consolidated city is an incorporated place that has combined its governmental functions with a county or subcounty entity but contains one or more other incorporated places that continue to function as local governments within a consolidated government. So consolidated city/county is simultaneously a city, which is a municipality and a county, which is an administrative division of the state, having the powers and responsibilities of both, okay. So consolidated city/counties -- and this is Jacksonville, Florida, this is a city/county -- are not designated county equivalents for administrative purposes since both the city and the county at least nominally exist. They are properly classified as counties in their own right. They are formed when one or more cities and their surrounding county area merge into one unified jurisdiction. And so here we go, a lagniappe for you. Do you know what "the balance" is? In nine city/county consolidations, pre-existing municipalities kept some of their sovereignty. So when looking at data, sometimes those areas are referred to as "the balance" and are not included in data for the consolidated area. So let's move on to county subdivisions. And these are the primary divisions of counties and the equivalent entities. They include Census county divisions. And we explain that over in the Statistical module. Census subareas and minor civil divisions and unorganized territories that can be classified as either legal or statistical, okay. So legal entities are termed "minor civil divisions." And statistical entities can be either Census county divisions or Census subareas or unorganized territories. We talk about those in that other module. But if we look over on this map of central Connecticut here, we can see that these are all county subdivisions. Some of these things, for example, Waterbury is actually -- south of Waterbury there, those are both cities. And then to the right and to the left we see Middlebury and Prospect, and those are actually towns or townships. But they all have equal sway and we consider them to be county subdivisions. So I did mention minor civil division. A minor civil division (or an MCD) is the primary governmental or administrative division of a county or county equivalent in many states and territories and of the equivalents in Puerto Rico and the island areas. The Census Bureau recognizes minor civil divisions in 29 states, Puerto Rico and the island areas. And believe it or not, the District of Columbia has no primary divisions and is considered equivalent to an MCD for statistical purposes. In New York and New England, these are called towns. And in most states, they are called townships. And in Puerto Rico, the MCD is called a "barrio". So the term "town" is used in New England, New York, and Wisconsin. And they have specific responsibilities and a degree of autonomy vary based on each state. So on the left, we have the New England towns. And on the right, we have Minnesota, New York, and Wisconsin that use the word town. But we also have in all the other states, they are called townships, but there are really county subdivisions, or what we call minor subdivisions. So let's move on to a little quiz that we have for you. In what part of the country are townships most prevalent? And so that would be the northeastern states. And which states use alternate terminologies for

"county"? So do you remember this? Alaska uses the word "borough," and Louisiana uses the word "parish."

How to Access Data for County Subdivisions (Towns and Townships) Using data.census.gov

Hi, my name is David Kraiker. I am a Geographer and a Data Dissemination Specialist at the United States Census Bureau. So we are going to take a deeper dive into the concept of county subdivisions so that we get a better feeling for one of these legal geographies. And so what we will do is go to this website, which is called "data.census.gov," and this is one of our primary portals for people to find data from the American Community Survey and a few other surveys as well. So I will come over here, under the main window here, to "advanced search." I will go to "geographies," and then further -- this is list of all the ways we present geographies, and I will come down here and hopefully I can find it. Here it is, "county subdivision," and then I will come down here to "New York State" and it offers me all these different counties, so I say "Albany County," and I say all the county subdivisions within Albany County, and then I will select one other county. I know that they're next to each other, Schenectady County, and I say all the subdivisions within Schenectady County. And then down here at the lower right, I say "search," and then this is trying to offer me some data, but I really want to just show you the map first. So I click on the map and it zooms into this area of New York State and we see two counties. Schenectady County, let me zoom in just a little bit, is up here on the left, upper part, and then Albany County down here. But as we move in, if you can see this, what really is happening here is that in New York State we have something called "towns" and these towns are sort of like mini-counties, right, and in parts of the country they're called "townships," but in New York and New England, they are called "towns," and they are also known at the Census Bureau as "minor civil divisions," MCDs. This, as county subdivisions, it's a comingling here, so you have the city, like city of Albany. Up here, for example, we have Watervliet city. We have over here Schenectady city right here. And you can almost even tell what are the towns versus the cities by their shape, so the cities have these sort of meandering-looking shapes to them, whereas, the towns have something more like a surveyed-looking boundary here. But a county subdivision at the Census Bureau is a way of giving you the information and it is sort of a commingling so that you get wall-to-wall data. If I went over here on the left and I clicked on "age and sex," it will show me a data table, give me the map first, but then I go to the table and I can now go across and I can see all the age and race and sex and things of this sort of populations living there. And this is Albany city, and as I move to the right, we will see other information. For example, right here we have Berne town in Albany County, and so it goes across and across like that, and this is just another way of retrieving data. If you went looking for the county subdivisions in many of the southern and western states, what you would probably get would be the incorporated places, and in most states, those are just called "cities," and you will get the census county division, which is actually a statistical entity. It is not legal. So this is just another way for you to think about the data, another tool for you to use to look and to figure out, you know, how the Census Bureau classifies different things.